



REBELLING AGAINST THE SYSTEM

EXTINCTION REBELLION >>PAGES 7 AND 10&11



QAnon—a dangerous conspiracy theory

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DONALD TRUMP? >>PAGE 17

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NEW SURGE OF COVID CASES, SCHOOLS AND TESTING CHAOS

THEY ARE TO BLAME



CALLOUS TORIES PUT US ALL IN DANGER >>PAGES 4,5&6

NHS

Health workers to stage protests against pay insult

SUPPORTERS OF the grassroots group, NHS Workers Say No to Public Sector Pay Inequality, have organised protests in more than 20 towns and cities across Britain.

They include London, Bristol, Manchester, Wigan, Liverpool, Sheffield, Chesterfield and Newcastle.

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BELARUS



Protesters defy Lukashenko's state brutality

OVER 100,000 people joined a "march for unity" in Minsk on Sunday. It marked the fourth week of mass marches that have brought the capital to a standstill.

The democracy movement follows a rigged election.

A carnival atmosphere continues on the big marches despite police intimidation.

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BENEFITS

Universal Credit robbery tips people 'over edge'

THE GOVERNMENT is snatching money from Universal Credit claimants with no warning.

One claimant told Socialist Worker how her payment had been slashed by a quarter—with no explanation or chance to appeal.

>>Page 3



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'The Left don't care about Costa staff losing their jobs, they just want covid to wreck capitalism'

The Mail on Sunday columnist **Dan Hodges** is looking out for the coffee shop workers

'Tell me one country run by a black person that isn't a shithole. They are all complete fucking toilets'

Donald Trump to his then fixer **Michael Cohen**

'Like the blacks, they're too stupid to vote for Trump'

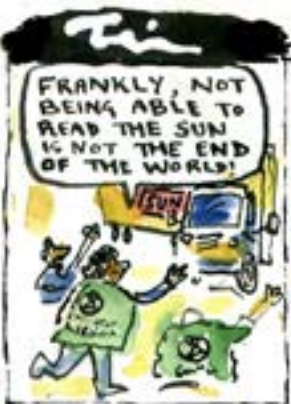
Donald Trump explains why Hispanic people didn't vote for him

'Cheat, a liar, a fraud, a bully, a racist, a predator, a con man'

Michael Cohen on **Trump**

'It looks like this government licks its finger and sticks it in the air to see which way the wind is blowing'

Sir Charles Walker vice-chairman of the Tory 1922 committee



Cummings' PR mates keep getting lucrative contracts

A LOBBYING and PR firm co-founded by an ally of **Dominic Cummings** has been given two government contracts without competitive tenders during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Office and Treasury contracts have been awarded to **Hanbury Strategy**, co-founded by **Paul Stephenson**.

He worked alongside Cummings as the director of communications for the 2016 Vote Leave campaign.

The other Hanbury founder, **Ameet Gill**, was **David Cameron's** director of strategy in Downing Street.

Hanbury is the fourth Tory-linked firm to have been awarded work since the start of the pandemic.

New emergency rules that allow public bodies to bypass the standard procurement rules requiring an open

DOMINIC Cummings

competitive tendering process.

The Cabinet Office awarded Hanbury a contract potentially worth £900,000 over seven months to research "public attitudes and behaviours in relation to" the pandemic.

The firm was hired on 16 March, shortly before Britain went into lockdown, although it took until 30 June for the contract to be

formally awarded.

A government spokesperson said the value of the contract was only for "possible spend".

In the end the Cabinet Office spent £580,000 on Hanbury before the work was brought to an end in July.

Since 11 June, the Treasury has additionally paid Hanbury £68,000 to conduct weekly public polling.

Other firms to get largess include **Topham Guerin**, a political communications company behind the Tory party's 2019 digital campaign strategy.

It was given a £3 million government contract to work on Covid-19 messaging.

Public First, a political consultancy owned by two long-term associates of Cummings and **Michael Gove** has been given contracts worth nearly £1 million during the pandemic.

Faculty, an artificial intelligence firm hired by Cummings to work on the Vote Leave campaign, is working on the government's response to the virus crisis.

The firm has been awarded at least 14 Whitehall contracts in the last two years, worth in total about £3 million.

EMERGENCY SERVICES rescued numerous people from the waters of **Lake Travis** in Texas last Saturday after at least four boats sank at an event promoted as a **Trump Boat Parade**. The Sheriff's Office in Travis County received "multiple" calls of boats in distress. Video from the scene shows one boat full of Trump supporters sinking while its occupants cry out for help.



Trumpists' sinking feeling

BORIS JOHNSON broke his own rules by speaking to Tory MPs at a meeting in the House of Commons. Straight after the meeting of the 1922 Committee of Tory backbenchers, Johnson's office tweeted that meetings of more than 30 people are illegal and anyone attending could be fined £100.

But despite this at least 50 Conservative MPs were crammed into the room for his meeting.

Car parker's furlough helps bumper profits

A HOSPITAL parking firm has taken a taxpayer bailout to pay staff despite bumper profits of £1.3 million.

UK Parking Control (UKPC), run by **Rupert Williams** and wife **Amanda**, used the job retention scheme to fund part of its wage bill during the pandemic.

UKPC has 248 staff and runs 2,000 car parks—many at NHS hospitals.

Turnover last year was £14 million, profits rose £200,000 and Williams paid himself nearly £447,000 in salary and dividends.

The figures sparked fresh anger at rip-off hospital parking fees.

Rupert Williams

Fees were suspended at hospitals shortly after Britain went into lockdown. But some health trusts are now planning to reintroduce them.

UKPC has been suspended twice by the DVLA, which provides driver details to enforce fines. In 2015 the company admitted faking time stamps on tickets to catch out legally-parked drivers.

Leaked memos show Johnson a Trump fan

BORIS Johnson privately told US diplomats that **Donald Trump** was "making America great again" according to a cache of official notes taken during high-level Britain-US meetings.

Johnson is quoted telling the US ambassador to Britain in August 2017, when he was foreign secretary, that Trump was doing "fantastic stuff" on foreign policy.

Johnson claimed Trump was becoming "increasingly popular" in Britain and spoke warmly about how under his leadership America was "back and engaged in the

world". The US president wondered why there was so much "hatred" in Northern Ireland.

He went on to ask the then prime minister **Theresa May** during a lunch why Johnson was not prime minister.

Trump was said to have been "hectoring" towards May in "nightmare" phone calls.

Donald Trump

Bigot Abbott gets trade job

AUSTRALIAN ex-prime minister **Tony Abbott** has been handed a plum position advising Britain's Board of Trade—despite his bigoted attitudes towards women and LGBT+ people.

Abbott described climate change as "probably doing good, or at least, more good than harm."

The right winger has been officially confirmed in the post after days of controversy about his appointment.

But confronted about his past comments, ministers have fobbed critics off.

Asked by **Sky News's Kay Burley** why the government was appointing a "homophobe and a misogynist" health secretary **Matt Hancock** said, "He's also an expert in trade."



Ed Davey

Lib Dems battered

THE NEW leader of the yellow Tories—the Liberal Democrats—**Ed Davey** began his nationwide "listening tour" at a chip shop.

Davey said he is sick and tired of getting battered at the polls. He is certain that there is a place for the Lib Dems. Troublemaker is less sure.

Disabled people are pushed out

DISABLED PEOPLE are being "pushed out" of a post-lockdown world with many anxious to leave the house, a charity has warned.

Scope said disabled people had been "routinely forgotten" in the pandemic.

Scope said queuing to get into shops, public toilet restrictions and a lack of parking due to the redesigning of towns and cities, had left many disabled people worried and confused.

Scope said it has been inundated with calls from disabled people and their families.

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Theft of Universal Credit tips people 'over the edge'

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE GOVERNMENT is snatching money from Universal Credit (UC) claimants with no explanation or warning. And claimants are finding it almost impossible to challenge the robbery.

Trish from Wishaw in North Lanarkshire made a UC claim in July, and finally found out how much she was awarded. But she was surprised to find a mysterious deduction had been applied to her money—slashing it by a quarter.

"I logged onto my journal to discover I was awarded something like £409 for the period 29 July to 30 August," she told Socialist Worker.

"A payment of just over £20 was coming off, which was agreed as it is for an advance I got previously.

"But then there was another deduction for £102. This apparently dates back to some overpayment of benefit in 1996."

Trish was outraged at the fact that, had she not logged onto her account, she wouldn't have even known about the deduction. She said she can't think of anything that it could relate to.

"They can't tell me what it's for because it's not on their system," she said. "They've given me four different numbers to ring, and none of them are taking incoming calls.

"The government states that you need so much a week to live on. To then have 25 percent of that deducted at source with no information is farcical."

Trish can't find out any further information or change the repayments.

"They won't renegotiate the payments because they say they don't have enough information," she said.

"I was furious."

Trish counts herself as one of the lucky ones, as she is currently able to live with her parents. But as she

pointed out, many people will be in more vulnerable and desperate situations.

"It's not a lot of money to live on," she said. "What if I wasn't staying with my parents? How would I pay for electricity and rent?"

"For some people out there, something like this will just tip them over the edge."

"It isn't possible for people to just not pay for things such as electricity or mobile phones.

"You're supposed to do 35 hours a week of job searching," said Trish. "So you need access to the internet.

"I've heard of people standing outside libraries to log in to the library Wi-Fi. People are having to do these kinds of things to fulfil the criteria for their benefits and try to avoid sanctions."

Trish said that so far she has been "fobbed off with nonsense".

But she added, "I am going to write to my MP and MSP about this. I will keep trying as many numbers as I can and pursue it with other departments.

"I will continue to fight it."



TRISH (left) is one of many people struggling without full benefits

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- Send 'start' to the number

Assange hearing begins

JULIAN ASSANGE began his latest fight against extradition to the US in the Old Bailey on Monday.

The hearing, scheduled to last four weeks, will hear allegations from the US Department of Justice that Assange tried to recruit hackers to find classified information.

The charges carry a maximum jail sentence of 175 years.

Assange is the founder of the organisation WikiLeaks. In 2010 it released about 470,000 classified military documents concerning US diplomacy and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Many of the documents revealed by Wikileaks

were obtained by former US soldier Chelsea Manning.

She spent seven years in jail and was jailed again for refusing to name those who helped her.

At one time there was a competing extradition request for Assange from Sweden, where two women had made allegations of sexual assault and rape. But the Swedish authorities have dropped the investigation.

It was right that Assange was investigated by the Swedish authorities.

But he should not be extradited to the US. To do so would punish him for exposing imperial slaughter.



Assange

IN BRIEF

Tory gowns are a goner

A TORY government plan to make reusable gowns for health workers has not produced a single approved garment after almost six months.

Yet the Department of Health and Social Care says the scheme is on track.

The government initiative aims to prepare a stockpile of reusable gowns ahead of a further rise in Covid-19 cases this winter. It has utterly failed, meaning that there could be another PPE crisis soon.

Adam Mansell, chief executive of the UK Fashion and Textile Association, said he sent the government a comprehensive plan for making reusable gowns in Britain in mid-July, but it had "done nothing with it at all".

He added that he believes the high price of the gowns, which cost about £15 each but can be washed up to 70 times, is the reason why the project has slowed.

The Tories think they can grab cheaper versions through subcontracting elsewhere—a process that has been disastrous previously.

Nicola Sturgeon

Scotland back in lockdown?

SCOTTISH FIRST minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has warned the Scottish government could be forced to reimpose more restrictions after a continuing rise in Covid 19 cases.

She was speaking after 146 new positive Covid-19 cases were reported on Monday in Scotland, with 78 of those in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board area. Some 225 cases were reported on Sunday.

Sturgeon confirmed the daily case numbers were similar to those last seen in early May and it was clear there was a fresh surge in cases.

The Scottish government has looked relatively efficient compared to the policies coming from Boris Johnson.

But its performance is among the worst in Europe, particularly in failing to protect care home residents.



Massive surge in virus cases shows Tory failures

by SADIE ROBINSON

BRITAIN RECORDED an enormous rise in coronavirus cases on Sunday. Some 2,988 people tested positive, compared to 1,813 on Saturday—a rise of over 50 percent.

It was the highest daily figure since May.

Professor Christina Pagel said, “There is no way you can look at these figures and feel confident that things are going in the right direction.” And professor Gabriel Scally said the government have “lost control of the virus”.

Yet the Tories continue to order people back into unsafe workplaces, schools and public transport.

Foreign secretary Dominic Raab told the BBC’s Andrew Marr show that people working from home is “damaging to the economy”.

“The economy needs to have people back at work,” he said. “We need to get Britain back up and running, the economy motoring on all cylinders.”

Raab claimed that employers are creating “Covid-secure” workplaces. Continuing outbreaks in workplaces tell a different story.

Jaguar Land Rover confirmed four positive tests among workers at its Solihull plant last week. It follows outbreaks at food manufacturing sites and garment factories.

Janet Newsham from the Hazards Campaign earlier this month said, “For weeks we have been recording case clusters from workers. The numbers involved clearly indicate they have become infected in workplaces.”

She said the outbreaks were due to workplaces failing to put safety measures in place and a lack of safe travel for workers.

Many ordinary people rightly do not trust the Tories or the bosses to keep them safe. A survey by Cardiff and Southampton universities found that 90 percent of respondents wanted to keep working from home “in some capacity”.

And a YouGov poll last week

found that over two thirds of people did not think firms should be encouraging staff working at home to return to work.

Transport for London reported a 15 percent rise in Tube passengers on Monday compared to the previous Tuesday, and a 39 percent increase in bus passengers. But numbers remain much lower than for the same period last year.

Private train firm figures show that there were three million fewer passengers travelling last week compared to the same time last year.

Yet cases are still rising sharply. Public Health England added more areas to its virus “watch list” last week, meaning restrictions could be imposed. They include Leeds, Middlesbrough and South Tyneside.

Several areas of the country remain under local lockdown. Yet as cases rise, the Tories are rationing tests (see page 6).

They claim a new laboratory that will double swab-testing capacity will be operating by the end of October. Their slow response shows the utter contempt they have for our health.

The Tories’ push back to work poses a deadly threat to working class people. Unions have to be pushed to resist it.

A CORONAVIRUS drive-through test centre

Coronavirus outbreaks in schools means students and staff still at risk

OVER 100 school outbreaks of coronavirus had been reported across Britain by Friday of last week. They include 73 in Scotland, where schools began to reopen from mid-August.

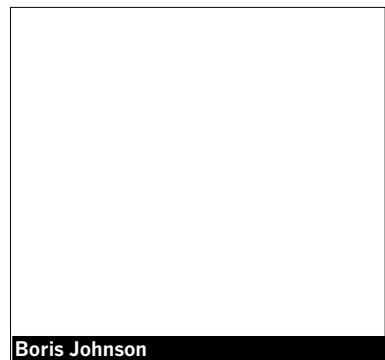
The NHS confirmed that students have passed the virus between themselves in Glasgow schools. The “evidence of transmission” exposes Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon’s claim that a rise in cases is simply due to household visits.

Schools in England began to reopen on Tuesday of last week.

By Thursday, five outbreaks had been recorded. By Friday there were 11. Hillsborough Primary School in Sheffield sent children and some staff home after a confirmed case in year 5 “bubble”. A “bubble” of students in the Chaucer secondary school in the city was “temporarily closed” after a confirmed case.

Dixons Kings Academy in Bradford recorded a positive case just days after reopening. There were two confirmed cases at another of the Dixons Academies Trust’s schools, Dixons Trinity Academy.

A spokesperson for the trust said, “Because the Dixons



Boris Johnson

Academies traditionally start back earlier than most schools, we are experiencing what we expect will become the new normal.”

The news will add to fears among parents, students and teachers about the risks of full school reopening.

Weston Super Mare parent Frances told Socialist Worker, “The government’s handling of the pandemic has been a fiasco from start to finish.

“I’ve got a 15 year old due to go back to school. I’ve got amazing respect for teachers. But I’m concerned about the resources that they don’t have.”

The Department for Education confirmed that schools and

colleges will be sent just ten home testing kits. School workers report being short on hand sanitiser and masks. One north London primary school teacher said, “When I was in school in summer, we were already using watered-down soap as ‘hand sanitiser’.”

Grandparents are particularly fearful about the risks of an unsafe return to schools. Some have said they will limit contact with grandchildren because of the increased danger of virus transmission.

The NEU Left group has said the union “is right to say staff could still use ‘Section 44’ to take immediate action on safety grounds”.

This says workers have a right not to work if they feel their health and safety is at risk.

And the NEU Left said union advice on what to do where there are cases in schools, including “escalating to industrial action ballots”, are vital. Frances said she had “no problem” with any school workers who refuse to return to an unsafe school.

How do we keep schools open and communities safe? NEU Left meeting Thursday 10 September, 6.30pm. bit.ly/NEULeft_September_10th

University union organises to stop unsafe reopenings

UCU union activists and others are organising to stop an unsafe return to universities and colleges.

It follows a report from the Independent Sage group of scientists last week that recommended university teaching take place online this term.

Elizabeth Stokoe from the group told a UCU zoom meeting last week, “US colleges are closing campuses with a rapid pivot to 100 percent online. In the UK, daily cases are rising.”

Ann Phoenix from the group pointed out that students can’t simply be kept in bubbles because they choose a range of different modules.

She added, “While students might be living on campuses or near, many members of staff cannot. That puts pressure on

them to use public transport, often many different modes of transport.

“The more people there are on campus, the more cleaning there has to be. More people have to be there to service all the things that are part of the infrastructure of universities.

“I think that’s really problematic.”

UCU general secretary Jo Grady said precarious

contracts mean staff often move between institutions. “You’ll have someone who works at Leicester, Derby and Coventry but lives in Birmingham,” she said. “What happens if that member of staff develops symptoms?”

NUS president Larissa Kennedy said students have “been sold a lie—that going back to normal is possible and safe”.

A GROUP of doctors has said workplaces are the frontline in the battle against Covid-19. A report from Doctors in Unite shows the role of airborne spread in factory outbreaks.

It says outbreaks have been caused by “airborne spread of the virus within the same enclosed indoor space of the factory”.

Jonathan Fluxman, co-author of the

report, told Socialist Worker that bosses and the Tories are putting people at risk.

At the Northampton Greencore factory where 300 people were infected, masks were optional. And health secretary Matt Hancock has claimed masks don’t work in offices.

Jonathan said this is “a gross ignorance from the minister of health. They are bending the truth and we know they lie.”

He added that the government is “not looking at evidence they don’t like”.

“If they accept the reality of airborne spread and the need for ventilation and re-engineering of the economy, then it means the current guidance is not fit for purpose,” he said.

For a longer version go to bit.ly/Fluxman

Resist civil service work return

THE TORIES and civil service bosses have renewed a drive to force government workers back into their offices by the end of September.

Cabinet secretary Sir Mark Sedwill said he wanted 80 percent of workers back at their desks at least once a week by the end of September.

It means that workers in major government

workplaces such as HMRC tax offices could be forced into offices—just as infections appear to be heading for a second peak.

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS union, said, “As a last resort, if you have no other option and people’s health and safety is at risk, of course we would be prepared to consider industrial action.”

Candy Udwin, a member of the PCS national executive committee, said workers should be prepared to resist if their managers begin attempts to reopen workplaces. “Every branch and every group of the union needs to meet now,” she told Socialist Worker. “We need to be ready on the ground to resist.”

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

TORIES—NOT YOUNG PEOPLE—RISK OUR LIVES

THETORIES are casting about for someone to blame for rising coronavirus cases. Their current favourite scapegoat is young people.

Health secretary Matt Hancock claimed this week that young people aren’t sticking to social distancing. “Don’t kill your gran by catching coronavirus and then passing it on,” he warned.

Of course it isn’t good if people disregard safety measures. But the real threat to people’s lives comes from the Tories.

From 4 July, hailed by some MPs as “Super Saturday”, the Tories have pleaded with us to visit pubs and restaurants. Chancellor Rishi Sunak went so far as to subsidise restaurant meals throughout August to entice more people out.

And they undermined social distancing by dropping advice that people should keep two metres apart.

The government is pushing children back to unsafe schools.

And, crucially, they and their media backers are waging a propaganda war to drive people back to work. Daily Mail front pages complain that train stations

aren’t crowded enough.

The Tories, not young people, are driving up risk. And their chaotic responses to the virus and mixed messages have sowed confusion. Many people rightly just don’t trust the Tories.

People in local lockdown areas have been told that family members can’t visit them at home or in their gardens. Yet they can meet in pubs, restaurants or parks.

Grandparents in locked down areas have been told they can’t look after grandchildren in their homes. But those grandchildren can go to childminders or nurseries—where they will mix with far more people.

It’s little wonder that some people disregard the advice because it simply doesn’t make



The government is pushing children back to unsafe schools

BOSSSES’ PRESS ISN’T FREE

WHEN Extinction Rebellion (XR) blockaded the entrances of two printing plants last week, it might not have anticipated the vitriolic response.

Tory home secretary Priti Patel accused the group of making an “attack on free press, society and democracy”.

Telegraph newspaper bosses temporarily removed its online paywall in what they imagined was a stinging rebuke against the action.

They also published an article declaring the group was

“infiltrated by Marxists”. It would be an outrage if socialists didn’t fight climate chaos, which is caused by capitalism.

XR’s action wasn’t just about stopping the right wing rags from reaching the newsstands. It was also about drawing attention to how the media fails to treat climate change as an emergency.

XR is right to say there isn’t a “free press”—and correct to point out how only a handful of media barons own the vast majority of newspapers.

Billionaire bosses employ

journalists to print stories that reflect their outlook on the world. That’s why titles owned by notorious climate change denier Rupert Murdoch pour scorn on climate change science.

But people challenge the lies they are told by the newspapers all the time. It’s not the case that readers passively accept what they are told by the press.

That’s why there’s huge public support for XR and the school climate strikes, despite the opposition coming from the Tories and the press.



ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Brexit bluster can't hide Tories' troubles

A YEAR ago Brexit dominated the headlines to the point of utter tedium. Now, of course, it's the Covid-19 pandemic, which is too deadly to tolerate boredom. But Brexit is mounting a comeback, with a vengeance.

Even though Britain formally left the European Union (EU) on 31 January, its departure will only really come into effect at the end of 2020.

The European Commission and Boris Johnson's government have been conducting desultory and, so far, utterly inconclusive negotiations on an agreement about the future relationship between Britain and the EU.

After the latest round last week, EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier complained, "So far, the UK has not engaged constructively." His British counterpart David Frost hit back in an interview with the Mail on Sunday.

It reverentially described him as "a former diplomat who rose to become the UK's ambassador to Norway" and then became a whisky lobbyist.

"We are not going to be a client state," Frost told the newspaper. "We are not going to compromise on the fundamentals of having control over our own laws. We are not going to accept level playing field provisions that lock us in to the way the EU do things."

And now the government is introducing a bill on the UK internal market that threatens to renege on the laboriously negotiated deal on the Irish border.

There will probably be much huffing and puffing over the terms on which EU fishing boats continue to get access to British territorial waters. But the key issue is trade.

The EU insists that if Britain wants to continue to sell goods and services tariff-free into the European Single Market it must commit itself to maintaining essentially the same trade regulation regime that governs this market.

This is the famous "level playing field". Boris Johnson committed himself to achieving it in the Political Declaration that accompanied the Withdrawal Agreement between Britain and the EU last October. The EU is adamant that he sticks by his word because it doesn't want a "Singapore on Thames"—a big neighbouring economy whose firms are allowed to undercut their continental counterparts.

Subsidies

It therefore wants London to continue to enforce the EU ban on state subsidies to industry. But, as the Financial Times reported in July, leading Brexiteers in Whitehall, headed by Johnson's chief adviser Dominic Cummings, support "a minimal, light-touch regime for state aid for British business after Brexit".

According to the Mail, Cummings "wants to plough £800 million into 'high risk, high-reward British research'".

A way round this conflict could be reached if both sides really worked at it. After all, the attention of London and Brussels has been elsewhere, on managing the pandemic. We shouldn't forget that, after nearly a year of paralysis, Johnson did renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement and got it through the House of Commons last autumn.

And, despite Johnson's and Frost's bluster, they have good reasons for avoiding a no-deal Brexit. It would seriously disrupt the supply chains connecting British firms to the EU just when a flare-up in infections might be deepening the economic crisis.

Moreover, a sharp break with the EU would be a gift to Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon in her drive to hold a second independence referendum.

But the political calculus is complicated. Johnson's descent into government by perpetual U-turn draws constant attention to the callous incompetence with which he has mishandled the pandemic from the start.

After the most important U-turn, over the A Level results, the Spectator magazine's Isabel Hardman commented, "Boris Johnson only really has a notional majority of 80."

But Johnson offers his ministers and MPs one solid thing onto which they can hang—the assurance of a real break with the EU. He has remade his party by purging or silencing its pro-EU wing, and now he must deliver what he promised.

This doesn't make a no-deal exit inevitable. Barnier endlessly repeats that the clock is ticking, but as the deadline draws closer this may push the EU into a serious effort to reach a compromise. But if Johnson believes a hard break with Brussels will save his premiership, he won't hesitate.

Poverty has made Covid-19 'endemic' in parts of Britain

COVID-19 COULD now be endemic in some of the poorest areas of Britain.

A leaked confidential report suggested the virus has become a permanent fixture in areas with severe deprivation, poor housing and large black and ethnic minority populations.

The Public Health England (PHE) report referred specifically to north west England, where several local lockdowns have been put in place. But it said its findings could apply to many other areas of the country.

"The overall analysis suggests Bolton, Manchester, Oldham and Rochdale never really left the epidemic phase," it said.

"And that nine of the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester are currently experiencing an epidemic phase."

The study builds links between the highest concentrations of Covid-19 and issues of deprivation, poor and crowded accommodation and ethnicity.

Its findings suggest that a key driver of coronavirus is pressure on poorer people to continue working in unsafe conditions. And poor quality, overcrowded housing helps to incubate and spread the virus.

Racism

This disproportionately affects black people thanks to structural racism that means they're more likely to work in unsafe jobs and live in sub-standard housing.

Another report from the Runnymede Trust released in August revealed how black and ethnic minority groups are over-represented in key worker roles. They have had

fewer opportunities to work from home.

They've had to use public transport more and are less likely to have been given adequate personal protective equipment.

Public health professor and independent Sage committee member Gabriel Scally said the leaked PHE report was "extremely alarming". "The data on housing is

POOR AND overcrowded housing (main) is a major driver of disease says Gabriel Scally (left)

extraordinarily important," he said. "Housing conditions are so important and always have been, whether it was for cholera or tuberculosis or Covid-19."

"Doing something about housing conditions for someone who has an active infection is extremely important and it is not something that can be handled by a call centre run by a commercial company hundreds of miles away."

Scally added that helping people to isolate by giving financial support is also crucial.

"Taking two weeks off if you are on a zero-hours contract is not an option for people," he said.

The PHE report used its

findings to question how effective local lockdowns are in reducing the spread of infections.

It asked, "If these areas were not able to attain near zero-Covid status during full lockdown, how realistic is it that we can expect current restriction escalations to work?"

But this shouldn't be an excuse to end all lockdown restrictions.

Instead it shows that the way to tackle coronavirus is to stop the push back to work and provide safe, affordable housing for all.

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Tory love of private sector is behind test failures

THE FAILURE of Britain's test and trace system is down to government "ideology" and its obsession with using the private sector, a senior public health expert has warned.

Professor Anthony Costello told the Independent Sage committee that the test and trace system—contracted out to private companies—had "failed".

The national test and trace system is based on call centres staffed by outsourcing firm Serco.

In many outbreak areas,

the centralised system is failing to reach clinical targets of tracing 80 percent of named contacts.

Virus experts say that target is necessary for it to be effective.

By contrast, public local authority-administered systems are tracing about 95 percent of contacts.

Yet the Tories renewed Serco's £300 million contract to operate the call centres last month.

Costello said, "The whole thing is public health malpractice and it's being designed and led by

government ideology. They wanted a private system. It has failed, and we need to keep saying that."

Meanwhile, parts of the north east of England ran out of coronavirus tests last week.

The area has seen a surge in cases, and Gateshead currently has one of the highest infection rates in England.

Government officials claim they have to ration tests to focus more on infection hotspots.

This makes it harder to quickly identify new outbreaks.

Testing for coronavirus

Extinction Rebellion takes on the right wing media barons

by SARAH BATES

EXTINCTION Rebellion (XR) protests—which began in London, Manchester and Cardiff last Tuesday—have drawn thousands of people worried about the climate crisis onto the streets.

And XR scored a victory when action in Knowsley, near Liverpool, and Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, delayed distribution of major national newspapers.

Cops made 80 arrests as people locked themselves to each other, bamboo structures and a truck.

“Just five billionaires control 70 percent of British media and they routinely ignore the climate and ecological emergency,” said the group.

“They campaign for their interests and politicians, while missing the story that our lives are distorted and threatened by endless consumption and pollution.”

The Sun, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and The Daily Mail newspapers were all prevented from being sent out from the sites.

In Knowsley, a yellow boat that was previously part of a regional rebellion in Leeds declared, “Fuck Murdoch, Fuck Rothermere, Refugees are welcome here.”

Marched

The anti-racist theme was taken up in London where hundreds of people marched to the Home Office chanting, “Climate justice is migrant justice.”

Jenny, who was one of those occupying the roads, told Socialist Worker, “Politicians don’t think this through—migration and climate change are interlinked.

“If the climate is screwed up people will have to find somewhere else to live.”

She said limiting temperature rise was a key demand and called on the government to “stick to the 1.5 degrees target”.

Laura had travelled up for the action from Sevenoaks, Kent, and said it was “moving to see so many people here”. “I’m a stay at home mum now, I don’t have a paid job,” she said.

“With climate change this is a way through the chaos—it makes me feel solidarity, to be surrounded by people who care.”

Helen Brewer, a member of the Stansted 15 group that stopped a deportation flight in March 2017, talked about racist immigration policies.

“We need to challenge the systems and the logic that builds prisons and borders and recognise how they target the most marginalised,”



EXTINCTION Rebellion on the streets of London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Tory fines threaten protest rights

EXTINCTION Rebellion (XR) could be facing a new crackdown by cops.

Tory ministers are reportedly looking into giving police greater scope to stop protests.

The move was said to come directly from Boris Johnson and home secretary Priti Patel, who want to review if XR could be classified as an organised crime group.

The clampdown comes directly after rebels stopped millions of right wing newspapers from reaching the stands last Saturday.

XR blasted reports that Johnson was targeting them, and said climate denier and media baron Rupert Murdoch was the one responsible for organised crime.

“If we are to have any hope of changing course the public need

Priti Patel

to be accurately informed about the threats they are facing,” XR said.

“With the flow of information in the grasp of a few powerful billionaires with ties to the fossil fuel industry and hands on the shoulders of our politicians the prospects don’t look good.”

Under coronavirus legislation, organisers of gatherings of more than 30 people could risk a fine of £10,000.

The Metropolitan Police said it is considering 20 people for a fine, including organisers of a Citizens’ Assembly, due to be held in Trafalgar Square last Saturday.

XR isn’t the only organisation in the firing line.

Police leant on organisers of two LGBT+ protests to call off the events, which were due to take place in London last Saturday.

The march over the right wing Polish government’s attacks on LGBT+ rights and a protest organised by the Trans Rights Collective UK were both cancelled.

Read a longer report about the cancellation of LGBT+ protests at bit.ly/LGBTcancel

Apply the brakes to HS2

ACTIVISTS escalated their action against the HS2 high speed rail project last week on the day that construction officially began.

Hundreds of people gathered in Parliament Square to listen to speeches from activists battling the construction.

But the police confiscated the PA system while a protester dressed as “Boris the Bank Engine” read an HS2-themed bedtime story to the crowd.

Jellytot, who is threatened with a prison sentence because of their anti-HS2 activity, said, “We have had an incredible impact.”

Huge cheers erupted throughout the square when they described how camps

have “delayed work by up to 12 months in some areas”.

And XR Lawyers member Paul Powlesland slammed HS2 bosses for using extra legal powers to target activists for civil offences such as trespass.

In London Euston, where the HS2 terminus is set to be, rebel Leayn climbed a 150-foot crane on Saturday morning.

She hung a banner declaring, “HS2 is corrupt.”

Leayn said HS2 was “ten times more expensive per mile than high speed rail elsewhere”.

“And it’s ruining our future by accelerating the climate and ecological emergency when we must apply the brakes,” she said.



On other pages...

Rebel to change the system
>>Pages 10&11



Belarusian protesters defy state brutality

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

TEN OF thousands of people took to the streets of Belarus over the weekend in defiance of president Aleksander Lukashenko's threats and intimidation.

Over 100,000 people joined a "march for unity" in Minsk on Sunday. It marked the fourth week of mass marches that have brought the capital to a standstill.

Thousands more took part in protests and rallies in smaller towns and cities across the eastern European country, including Brest and Grodno. Several thousand joined a Women's March in the capital the previous day.

The Belarusian democracy movement follows a rigged election.

President of 26 years Lukashenko claimed 80 percent of the vote over liberal challenger Svetlana Tichanovskaya.

A carnival atmosphere continues on the big marches despite police intimidation. As the crowd marched near the presidential palace, people began chanting, "Lukashenko—to the police van," and, "Tribunal."

The regime is relying on state violence and intimidation in the hope of quelling the movement.

Plain clothed thugs armed with batons chased down and beat up groups of protesters on Sunday.

Bundled

Unknown men bundled Maria Kalesnikava, a leading member of the opposition Coordination Council of Belarus, into a minibus the following day.

Unofficial walkouts at more than 70 companies posed a serious threat to the regime last month.

The strike wave has stalled for now, although some people still refuse to go back to work and there are a few stoppages.

Sections of the BelAz vehicle manufacturer remained shut last week. Electricity network workers in Ostroshiki Gorodok gathered outside the management building and discussed leaving the state-run trade unions.

And at the Grodno meat packing plant, workers issued a public appeal for a rerun of the presidential election and an end to police violence.

BACK STORY

Protests erupted in Belarus in August after a rigged election

●The vote gave hated president Aleksander Lukashenko a massive majority

●But tens of thousands of people took to the streets—and faced police brutality

●Workers in factories struck in solidarity and in the defence of protesters

●Lukashenko has refused to budge—but the resistance to him continues

Many workers are taking part in "go slows"—going into work but slowing down production as much as possible to hit the regime.

There are small signs that workers could begin to link political and economic demands and shape what comes next.

The strike committee at the Belaruskali potash ore mines, one of the regime's key firms, has put demands over working conditions to management.

One message from the committee, focusing on workers' complaints over ventilation, says, "They took away their voice, now they are trying to take away their health."

Battle

There will be a battle over what comes next if Lukashenko goes.

The Coordinating Council brings together a range of forces, including liberal politicians, bosses and a few strike leaders.

Its leadership wants more free market policies, which Lukashenko began pursuing to court foreign investment in the 2000s.

Western leaders are posing as supporters of the Belarusian fight for freedom.

But the British military only last week suspended its cooperation agreement with the Belarusian military

The West and the market offer no genuine alternative for working class people in Belarus.

PROTESTERS IN Minsk hate Lukashenko's violent regime

UNITED STATES

Republicans and Democrats compete to condemn anti-racists on the streets

ALL OF Donald Trump's November re-election hopes are pinned on a scaremongering, racist campaign against the Black Lives Matter movement. But now it looks as though the Democrats are all too eager to join in.

Trump last week toured parts of Kenosha that were burnt out in a wave of anger at the police shooting of Jacob Blake. Blake was shot in the back several times during an arrest last month.

Trump attacked anti-racists who took to the streets, saying, "These are not acts of peaceful protest, but really domestic terror."

Just days before he had defended Kyle Rittenhouse, a right wing militiaman who killed two Black Lives Matter protesters in Kenosha.

Democratic hopeful Joe Biden was also in town—in a bid to "heal" rifts and, in effect, demobilise the anger at police racism.

His team released a record-breaking £34 million series of campaign ads last week.

The ads don't target the cops or their heavily armed militia allies, but instead those who fought

back against them. "Rioting is not protesting. Looting is not protesting," says Biden in his ad. "And those who do it should be prosecuted."

Trump countered with ads of his own, which say, "Communities not criminals" and "Jobs not mobs".

The two candidates are now locked into battle on who can appear the toughest on crime.

The result can only be a confidence boost for the racist right in all its guises.

Strike

Last week the Democrats sent former president Barack Obama to negotiate an end to the brilliant anti-racist strike by sports players.

Obama told the strike leaders that they were risking a Trump victory by carrying on with their action.

He said they should concentrate on mobilising people to vote instead. Reluctantly, the strikers' leaders agreed.

The Democrats' swift embrace of the law and order agenda is a grave warning to all those who think that a Democrat victory in November

will also be a victory for anti-racism. Biden, and his running mate Kamala Harris, pledge themselves to only the most minimal reforms of the police, while rejecting any talk of "defunding".

In office, they will do what every Democrat administration before them has done.

They will give their backing to racism and state repression as part of a defence of the establishment.

●POLICE IN Portland last week killed an anti-fascist wanted for the shooting of a Trump supporter who had joined a right wing raid on the city last month.

Michael Forest Reinhoel described himself on a social media as "100% ANTIFA". A federal taskforce shot and killed him shortly after he gave a media interview.

He had explained that he "had no choice" but to shoot the Trump supporter as he thought he and his friend were about to be stabbed.

He said, "I could have sat there and watched them kill a friend of mine of colour. But I wasn't going to do that."



On other pages...

Why QAnon conspiracy theorists are important for Trump >>Page 17

Strictly takes step forward

OLYMPIC BOXER Nicola Adams will have a same sex partner on the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing show.

This is huge for LGBT+ people, many of whom such as myself watch Strictly every year.

When she appeared on BBC Breakfast, Adams herself talked about the importance of representation.

This comes at difficult time for LGBT+ people in Britain and globally.

In Poland, LGBT+ people are fighting for their basic rights against a hard right homophobic government.

The BBC itself has faced a backlash for featuring LGBT+ people.

In November, the broadcaster received 189 complaints when Johannes Radabe and Graziano Di Prima danced together on Strictly.

And earlier this year the BBC came in for more criticism for featuring a same-sex kiss on children's show The Next Step.

Adams dancing with a same sex partner is a small victory for LGBT+ people, but a hard fought one and a long time coming.

Increasing our appearance in mainstream television helps to beat back reactionary attempts to drive us back into the closet.

We now must remain loud and proud and keep fighting for full LGBT+ liberation.

Nathan Johnston
Newcastle



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

It's time for a new squatters' movement to win us housing

THE HORRENDOUS situation facing renters during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in the private sector, is going to get much worse after 21 September (Socialist Worker, 26 August).

This is the date when the temporary ban on evictions ends. The root cause of the problem is the drastic shortage of council housing.

Historically, local authorities have been the best provider of decent, genuinely affordable and secure rental housing.

Coronavirus has now dramatically intensified the housing crisis.

It had already blighted the lives of thousands of private tenants

and homeless people. But the pandemic means jobs and incomes are threatened.

And landlords are poised ready to threaten to evict those with unavoidable arrears during the lockdowns.

The Jeremy Corbyn leadership of the Labour Party had an excellent policy in place to deal with the housing crisis.

Their programme included the building of 100,000 homes by councils for social rent a year.

But, so far, there has been no sign from the current leadership under Sir Keir Starmer that it will wholeheartedly continue with this policy.

Labour's new shadow housing,

communities and local government secretary, Thangam Debonnaire, has scarcely made any specific reference to council housing at all.

Perhaps the time is ripe for a repeat of the widespread squatting movement that sprung up after the end of the Second World War?

At the time many families without housing occupied empty military establishments and other public buildings.

This movement helped to kick-start a massive council house building programme.

Council housing is the only real solution to our completely dysfunctional housing system.

John Marais
Norwich

Coronavirus has shown No end to Tory Gavin Williamson's lies up the outsourcing con

TORIES HAVE given out at least £2.5 billion in NHS contracts since coronavirus began.

It show that, for all their protestations to the contrary, they are forging ahead with privatisation.

And the contracts show they don't give a monkey's about efficiency and cost—it's ideological.

All we have to do is look at the test and trace system, run by multinational Serco.

Boris Johnson thinks that if he keeps saying it's "world beating" it will

make it world beating, but it's been shocking. If they had investment money into local public health instead, test and trace would be working by now.

The Tories have been handing out contracts without a proper bidding process, meaning there's been no transparency.

With or without bidding, outsourcing is the problem.

It takes money out of the NHS and is about making profit.

Jackie Applebee
GP in east London

TORY education secretary Gavin Williamson moves from one disaster to another.

He has been responsible for the failed attempt to widen the opening of schools in June and the debacle over the exam results.

All this while being exposed as lying about when he knew of the disastrous algorithm affair.

The market has come to dominate every aspect of education.

People should know, for example, that last year



Gavin Williamson

cash starved schools paid out approximately £300 million pounds to privately owned exam boards.

This is money that should be spent on our children not friends of the

Tories. The silence from the Labour Party, who have not even called for his resignation, is deafening.

Williamson, like his boss Boris Johnson, perfectly sums up everything that is wrong about this Tory government—ignorant, arrogant and self-serving.

If the Labour Party are not up to the job of effectively opposing them then it's down to teachers, students and parents to finish them off.

Jan Nielsen
North London

Just a thought...

Karl Marx was green and red

IN RESPONSE to your article on Extinction Rebellion, Steve Oram asks what has climate got to do with socialism (Socialist Worker, 2 August).

Environmentalism has everything to do with socialism.

The revolutionary Karl Marx recognised that capitalism was not only damaging to the individual and society, but it was damaging to nature and the environment as well.

Marx wrote in his great work Capital that societies or nations were "not owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations".

So protecting the environment is one of the hallmarks of a true and functional socialist society.

Nic Murphy
On Facebook

Teach Britain's imperial past

I READ your article on Cruel Britannia (Socialist Worker, 2 August).

The truth is we are—and always were—a cruel and genocidal country.

And the truth should be taught in every school, in fact at every opportunity in any circumstance.

Pam Thompson
On Facebook

■ IT'S TELLING how Britain's rulers can't let go of their imperial past.

They're desperate to keep up the racist divide and rule that came with the empire.

Julia Ryder
Worcestershire

Shame of our asylum rules

THE DEATH of Mercy Baguma, an asylum seeker living in poverty, is an outrage (Socialist Worker 2 September).

It reflects badly on all of us in Britain.

Jon Hancock
On Facebook

■ WHAT A disgrace to see Britain First attacking asylum seekers.

Refugees and migrants add to our society. Nazis cheapen it.

Nina Fenwick
Central London

REBELLING AGAINST THE SYSTEM

As Extinction Rebellion takes to the streets of London, Manchester and Cardiff, **Sarah Bates** looks at the movement demanding urgent action on climate change

CLOWNS DANCING through London, over 200 cyclists arrested for blocking Lambeth Bridge and animal rights activists locking themselves to a truck.

It's hugely refreshing to see people on the streets fighting for urgent climate action. The numbers involved exceeded most people's expectations of what would be possible.

This is rebellion—but not quite as we have known it before. Gone were the tents filling the streets of central London, kitchens dishing out hot food for rebels and there were no pink speedboats or giant octopuses in sight.

Thousands of Extinction Rebellion (XR) members flocked to London, Cardiff and Manchester last week to begin the latest phase of their mission to tackle the climate emergency.

The mobilisations were much smaller than the rebellions that gripped London last April and October, which drew in tens of thousands of people at their height.

Barbara had travelled from Somerset to be part of the week's actions and said she'd been an activist since growing up in apartheid South Africa. She told Socialist Worker that this rebellion felt different, partly because there were fewer numbers on the streets. "Obviously there's a pandemic about and people are nervous, some feel it's more socially responsible to stay at home," she said.

"It's still amazing—full of energy and we're still inventive."

Instead of being spread throughout camps in central London, most activity was centred around Parliament Square, with smaller groups organising lock-ons, marches and rallies.

"There's a fantastic energy because people have turned up here in a

pandemic," said. Diana. "It includes lots of elderly people who feel strongly enough that they should be here because of the climate emergency we're in."

She said watching older people get arrested "brought tears to my eyes—that they have to go through this".

Arrests are at the heart of XR's non-violent direct action strategy. Filling jail cells, and therefore creating headlines, is part of what has grabbed attention.

But XR does not celebrate arrests in the same way it might have done previously.

Arrest

Its press release last week said, "Following the racist arrest of a young black bystander in Parliament Square, repeated arrests without warning in Parliament Square, threats of conspiracy charges made against two men pushing a boat named 'Lightship GRETA', Extinction Rebellion has put the Metropolitan Police on notice.

"We condemn as grossly excessive the Met's communications, their policy and their policing."

And later the same day XR said, "A bridge party began after Critical Mass cyclists locked on to each other and their bikes, and now rebels are being arrested left and right.

"Rebels were not given warnings and were not given the opportunity to leave."

The state has shown it can step up its repression of XR when it deems it necessary. But XR has also won the right to be in Parliament Square, an area that is normally highly restricted for protesters.

(Clockwise from above) Extinction Rebellion's protest in central London last week was joined by thousands of people. Police 'kettled' cycling protesters on Lambeth Bridge and then started arrests (below)

PICTURES: TIM WEBSTER/XR AND GARETH MORRIS/XR



XR has pushed the ecological emergency up the agenda and built on the anger and despair unleashed by inaction over climate change.

In a matter of just a few weeks during 2018, XR went from being an organisation with a handful of members to drawing thousands of people into action.

In November, just two weeks after its launch event, thousands of people occupied five bridges in London. They shut them down for the day and caused huge disruption to the capital.

Inclusive

Diana, who's been involved in XR for around two years, said that in that time the direct action group has become "bigger, more sensible and more inclusive". "I have friends in Africa whose harvests have been affected this year," she said.

"They've made 10 percent of what they expected and that's because of the changeable rains.

"There are people affected right now and we need to hear their voices, and the movement has got better at including them. We can always do more, but we are hearing more about who is suffering now".

The Black Lives Matter movement was a key turning point for XR.

In response to a growing movement against police brutality, the group apologised for its friendly stance on the police and said it would work harder to include black activists.

It was certainly a big

mistake to pretend that the police could be allies of any radical movement.

Sarah said anti-racism was often discussed in activist circles in the "language of privilege and of fragility" that she finds "quite Americanised and quite jargony. But I do I think XR want to take up questions of anti-racism—there's a real desire to do that," she said.

This rebellion was clearly focused on parliament, and its failure to treat the threat of climate change like the emergency it is.

In particular, XR has thrown its support behind the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill tabled by Green MP Caroline Lucas last week.

Rhiannon was at the London rebellion for the day and made a homemade placard blasting Boris Johnson for the occasion. She told Socialist Worker that she was hoping to get sympathetic MPs on board because Johnson was "in dereliction of his duty to the people of the country".

She added, "I have very little belief that Johnson is interested in my opinion. I come out here and do this sort of thing to make sure they don't change who I am, and what I believe in, as much as changing who they are, and what they believe in."



This rebellion was clearly focused on parliament and its failures



XR has always been strongest when it's at its biggest.

In October last year, it was hugely powerful when 30,000 people marched through central London on a "grief march". And then when 2,000 people filled Trafalgar Square to defy the cops' heavy handed protest restrictions, it showed the strength and confidence of the movement.

Streets

What helps power this is its ability to consistently draw in new people. Even during the latest phase of action, even during a pandemic, new activists such as Saija were filling the streets.

She told Socialist Worker it was "exhilarating" to be on her first protest.

Saija said a major draw for her was the peaceful nature of the organisation, explaining, "There's no aggression—we're just sitting here spreading our message."

But nobody can ignore that the coronavirus crisis has confirmed that capitalism is a death-dealing system that sidelines the interests of the vast majority.

It's a system of racism, recurrent pandemics, war—and climate chaos.

That's why it was wrong for one XR tweet to distance the organisation from a banner saying "Socialism or extinction".

"Just to be clear we are not a socialist movement," it said. Why not condemn capitalism instead?

For all the wrangling within the organisation, which saw a split by founder Roger Hallam, XR is uniquely placed to push forward the climate emergency.

This sense of radical, urgent action, is what helps keep XR relevant, and keeps new people filling their ranks.

And Sarah, who had been part of the action in Manchester said XR was important because it was able to "mobilise young people motivated by climate injustices. It has this ability to bring all kinds of different people together," she said.

Being part of the rebellion—whether directing workshops from the tree-tops or making speeches outside the Treasury—solidifies rebels' desire to do more.

It's a mobilisation to celebrate and be part of. For Ida, being part of the action "feels powerful, it feels like we're part of a big movement and we can change things".

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas (below) has a Private Members' Bill on the environment. It has become a focal point for Extinction Rebellion campaigning



Activist locks-on to protest van in central London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Parliament won't match urgency we need to tackle climate chaos

KEY EVENTS in London during the Rebellion have focused on the action—or rather inaction—of the British parliament.

Many climate activists are hoping that a proposed new law, introduced by Green Party MP Caroline Lucas, will push parliament into action.

But after its formal introduction last week the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill won't even be debated in parliament for its second reading until 12 March. It's obvious that actions can't be on hold depending on the parliamentary timetable.

Last Tuesday, when Lucas tabled the new law, rebels glued themselves to the entrances of parliament and called on MPs to back the bill.

Lucas argues the bill "strengthens existing legislation, patches the holes in the current law and provides a response at the scale and speed that the science demands."

But, as a Private Members' Bill not government legislation, it doesn't have as much time to be debated and passed.

And in the end whether it goes through would depend on the attitude of Tory MPs.

As the official parliamentary website puts it, "Very few Private Members' Bills become law".

Their main purpose is to draw attention to an issue, something that XR's direct action and the school climate strikes have done far more powerfully than any bill.

Even if passed, laws are often toothless. The 2008 Climate Change Act commits the British government to reducing carbon levels so they are

at least 80 percent less than 1990 levels.

The 2008 Act didn't go far enough—it ignored emissions from shipping and aviation.

To achieve the 80 percent cut, the government focused heavily on carbon "budgets" and carbon trading.

Carbon

Carbon budgets allow rich governments the opportunity to buy their ability to pollute more than poorer countries.

And carbon trading means that pollution guzzling countries can claim to offset their emissions by installing natural carbon sinks, such as forests, in other countries.

Despite the 2008 Act—and the 2015 Paris Agreements—emissions continue to rise and the government keeps pushing forward with climate-wrecking policies.

Fracking was abandoned by firms last year due to a mixture of public pressure and poor harvesting of gas. It wasn't because of the legal obligation of the government to limit emissions.

It will take more than climate laws to make governments act in the interests of the planet and people, rather than in their self-interest and profit.



The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill won't be debated until March 2021

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

Socialist Workers Party online meetings

No return to normal...
What kind of health service do we need?

CAMBRIDGE

Thu 17 Sep, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

KENT

Thu 17 Sep, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

NEWCASTLE

Wed 16 Sep, 7pm
368-595-2712

NORWICH

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

{ SOCIALIST WORKER }
ONLINE MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and local interventions. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM

Coronavirus and the economy— who pays for the crisis?

Wed 16 Sep, 7pm
281-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY
How the Black Panthers fought the state

Wed 16 Sep, 8pm
352-891-2411

BOLTON AND WIGAN
Lebanon— catastrophe to revolution

Thu 17 Sep, 6.30pm
872-5136-9540

BRADFORD
Where does racism come from?

Thu 17 Sep, 7pm
885 9187 7552

BRISTOL

Coronavirus and the economy— who pays for the crisis?

Thu 17 Sep, 7.30pm
688-397-3148

BURNLEY AND PENDLE
Lebanon— catastrophe to revolution

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
446-409-5118

CARDIFF
Antisemitism, Zionism and the left

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD
Why does capitalism need exams?

Thu 17 Sep, 6.30pm
829-532-8731

COLCHESTER
Capitalism, diet and the politics of food

Thu 24 Sep, 7pm
872-3074-2363

COVENTRY

Trump, racism and the election

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH
US election— Democrats, Trump and the working class

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
894 2628 7708

EDINBURGH
Is science neutral?

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
431-459-112

EXETER
The politics of food— who is to blame for obesity?

Wed 16 Sep, 7pm
865-2972-2883

GLASGOW
Trump, China and imperialism

Thu 17 Sep, 6.30pm
851 5254 7239

HARLOW

How the Black Panthers fought the state

Thu 24 Sep, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HOME COUNTIES
The bloody history of the British Empire

Thu 17 Sep, 6pm
822 4880 4652

HUDDERSFIELD
Civil Rights, Black Power & BLM— radical traditions of fighting racism in the US

Thu 17 Sep, 7pm
290-168-1804

LEEDS
Can the police be reformed?

Thu 17 Sep, 7pm
935-5290-8076

LIVERPOOL
Uprising in Belarus— can workers win?

Wed 16 Sep, 7pm
493-925-5919

LONDON—HACKNEY
Lebanon— catastrophe to revolution

Thu 17 Sep, 7.30pm
798-534-2585

LONDON—HARINGEY
Fake news and alternative facts— who controls the media?

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
459-388-1576

LONDON—ISLINGTON
Fake news and alternative facts— who controls the media?

Thu 17 Sep, 7pm
874-012-7970

LONDON—NEWHAM
Do we need violence to get socialism?

Wed 16 Sep, 7.30pm
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The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

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Audacious film about police brutality in French suburbs

Les Misérables channels the rage of the Yellow Vests and Black Lives Matter movements against cops, racism and poverty today, writes **Stephen Philip**

THIS IMPRESSIVE debut film of the black French filmmaker Ladj Ly, *Les Misérables*, is an incendiary provocative drama.

It casts a light on France's police racism and corruption, squalid housing projects, racial oppression and youth driven revolt.

The relation to Victor Hugo's 1862 novel of the same name is that the original *Les Misérables* is set in the director's home suburb Montfermeil.

By doing so, Ly audaciously calls out the similar dire social conditions and celebrates the power and energy of the Parisians that the rich spurn.

Les Misérables begins with black boys from the housing projects celebrating France's World Cup victory focussing on the key protagonist—a young tearaway, Issa.

They are glorious and joyful scenes of multiracial unity that are to be severely tested by the grim reality of their lives on the estate.

The following scenes astutely portray a series of observational vignettes of the boys' surroundings.

We see a mainly North African community run by various forces on the street. The Muslim Brotherhood try to control the kids and keep them on track.

There's also a charismatic ex con turned spiritual leader, a corrupt "Mayor" who runs the market place stalls and other gangster factions.

Then there are the cops—who are the narrative's focus—that patrol and mindlessly harass the black community.

Bully

The nasty bully and bigot Chris revels in his nickname Pink Pig while his black sidekick Gwada tolerates his excesses.

They're joined by the new cop on the block, the naive, honest and more orthodox policeman, Stephane.

The relative calm is broken when Issa steals a lion cub from a circus. The Romana circus crew threaten to instigate a racially charged "war" with the Mayor if he doesn't retrieve the cub.

The police fear a conflagration, in the same manner as the three weeks of riots in and are determined to track down Issa.

This is assured filmmaking from Ly, confidently orchestrating vividly realised action scenes, controlling the pace and ratcheting up the tension.

He also ably manages a narrative that focuses on the police and yet our sympathies purposefully remain with the black youth.

In interview, Ly says, "The youth are rebelling against all form of



COPS STEPHANE, Chris and Gwada (left to right)

authority. It's not just a revolt against the police. It's a revolt against everything, against the entire system that puts in place these figures, whether it's the cops, the self-appointed 'mayor,' the drug trafficker. It's a general revolt."

Les Misérables portrays quite a masculine world and perhaps would have been a more truthful portrait with stronger female voices.

Tinder-box

Nevertheless, it is reminiscent of Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*, depicting a community as a tinder-box ready to explode from a minor flashpoint.

Closer comparisons can be made to *La Haine*'s urban realism (see box) and its driving stark urgency.

The film closes with a telling quote from Victor Hugo. "There are no bad plants or bad men—there are only bad cultivators."

It's an unmissable film at the intersection of the raw energy of the oppressed in the Yellow Vest movement and the righteous rage of Black Lives Matter.

Les Misérables is in cinemas now. Go to miserables.film for listings

La Haine back in cinemas

NEARING THE 25th anniversary of *La Haine*'s release, Curzon is showing the film again in a number of its cinemas.

Opening with real newsreel footage, *La Haine* follows a day in the life of three young men in the aftermath of an anti-police riot on their Paris estate.

Their friend Abdel was beaten by police—the act of brutality that sparked the riot—and is now in hospital fighting for his life.

Vinz is constantly furious and insists he'll have revenge if Abdel dies. Hubert wants to escape but can't see a way out. Said is just trying to get by. All of three of them hate the police—

and the cards they've been dealt—viscerally.

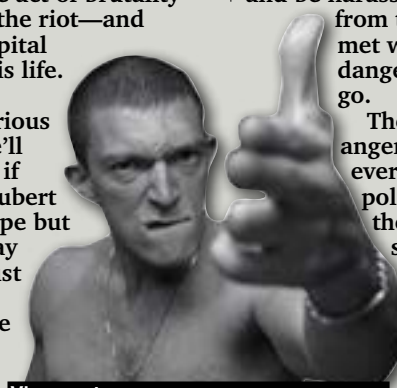
It's not just the subject of police brutality that makes *La Haine* still relevant. It's also that the three friends all seem to be suffocating.

On the estate, they can stay stuck inside their overcrowded flats, or hang around outside and be harassed by police. Away from the estate, they're met with hostility and danger wherever they go.

Their simmering anger boils over at every humiliation and police beating. But they're trapped in a system that forces escalating violence upon them.

Nick Clark

Go to bit.ly/La-Haine-curzon for listings



Vinz wants revenge

DOCUMENTARY

AFRICA TURNS THE PAGE: THE NOVELS THAT SHAPED A CONTINENT

Available now on BBC IPlayer

SHORTLISTS FOR the world's major literary prizes are packed with African authors, while novelists such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have become international celebrities.

In this fascinating and insightful film, Nigerian-born presenter and historian David Olusoga explores the incredible story of the African novel.

From the 1950s, as African nations fought for independence, writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka wrote for a continent. Often



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

they paid a personal price for speaking out against colonialism and corruption.

In their wake, the African novel was to spread around the world, with writers of the African diaspora such as Buchi Emecheta and Ben Okri.

The programme features interviews with novelists working today.

We hear from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Aminatta Forna and 2019 Booker winner Bernardine Evaristo.

The documentary features archive of the key novelists and contributions from leading figures whose lives were touched by their writing.

DOCUMENTARY

AMBULANCE

Starts 9pm, Wed 16 Sept on BBC1

THIS IS the latest series of the Bafta award-winning documentary *Ambulance*.

Filmed in the autumn of 2019, the cameras focus on a whole new cast of characters drawn from the staff of the London Ambulance Service.

Call handler Abbie is taking an emergency 999 call for a patient having a seizure at work. Mandy, one of 24 dispatchers on duty, immediately sends crewmates Kayleigh and Lauren to help.

Ambulance crew Kate and Femi are dispatched to a young man who is struggling to breathe.

THERE'S a moment in the Marvel film *Black Panther* when the camera pans upwards to reveal Wakanda in all its glory—a hyper-modern, black state in Africa's future.

The gleaming capital city reflects the hidden country's power and prosperity, its technology light years ahead of its competitors.

Okoye, the head of court security, gazes out upon it all and says simply, "Home."

For the millions who saw the film, it is a wonderful vision of a dynamic black future.

A key part of *Black Panther*'s global appeal was the way it imagined Africa.

It was not the devastated and desolate landscape so often presented to us on the TV news.

Instead it was at the cutting edge of human ingenuity, and black people were at the helm in every sphere of life.

These themes have clearly influenced Akon, the Senegalese-American rapper, musician and media mogul. He's planning a £4.5 billion "real-life Wakanda" in the country he grew up in.

Akon plans to start construction of Akon City, his "pan-African" mega community, next year.

He hopes it will be built by 2023 and become a "home back home" for black Americans and others facing racial injustice.

The Senegalese authorities couldn't be happier.

The prospect of such a large investment is tantalising in a country largely starved of funds.

They sent ministers this week to join him at grassy fields 60 miles outside the capital, Dakar, to show journalists where the city will be built.

But there are deep problems with Akon's vision.

The picture he paints resembles nothing so much as a giant playground for the rich, as if present-day Dubai were rebuilt on Africa's Atlantic coast.

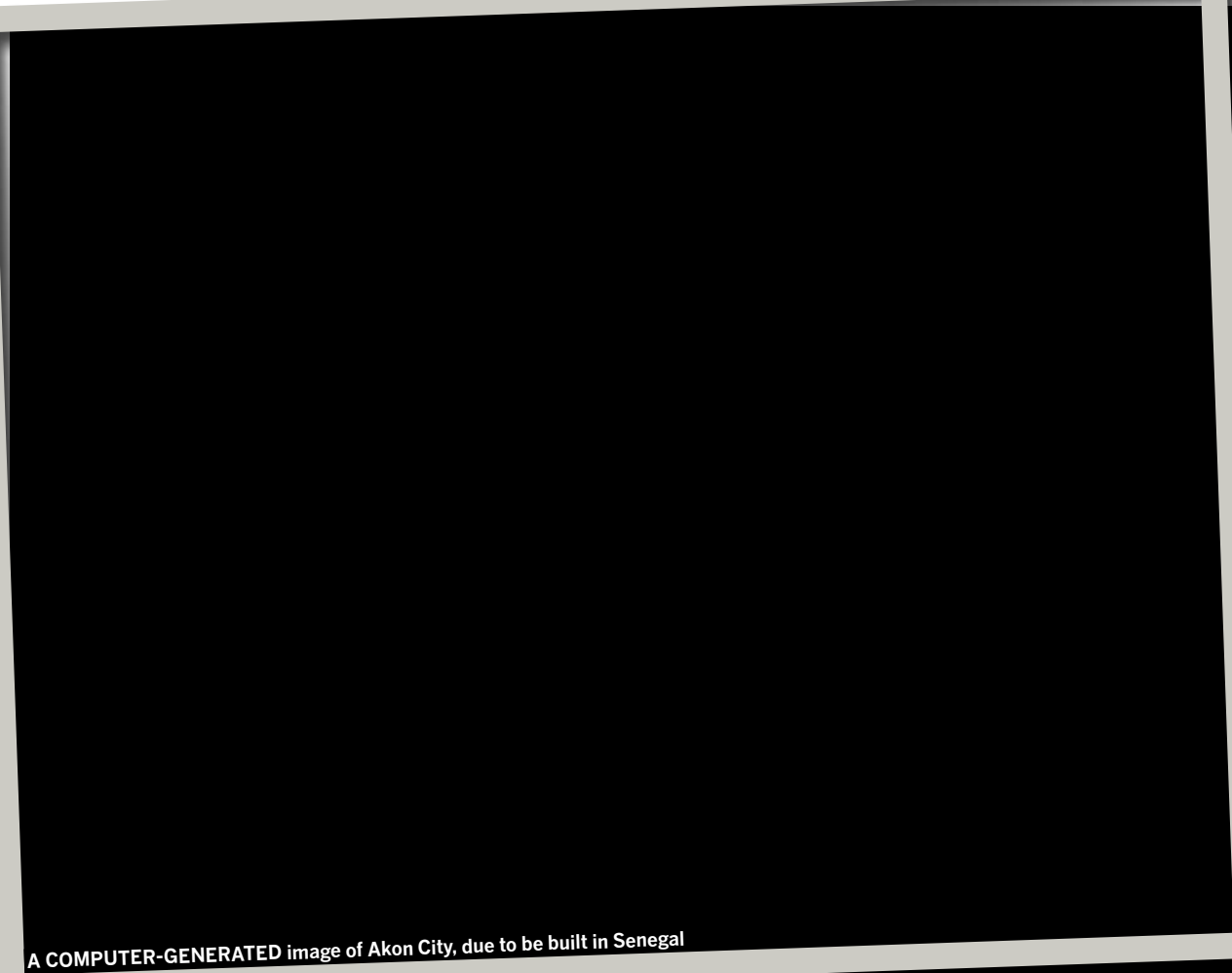
It will feature luxury apartments, a beachfront resort, offices, parks, a university and a hospital. All of which, Akon says, "may be an hour flight, two-hour flight from anywhere in Africa".

THIS ISLAND of prosperity will sit in the Senegalese countryside, where only 44 percent of households currently have electricity.

The farmers who currently grow crops on the land will be relocated elsewhere, and doubtless rewarded for their sacrifice.

Akon insists his city planners aim to hire locally and source materials from West Africa.

The singer said the result



A COMPUTER-GENERATED image of Akon City, due to be built in Senegal

IS AKON CITY BLACK POWER FOREVER?

Rapper Akon plans to build a new city where black people can escape racism. But, as Yuri Prasad writes, any system based on riches for a few means oppression will remain

will be "very, very African". But models of Akon City show something close to the glass towers and steel structures that litter every corporate skyline—from Johannesburg to London and beyond.

Perhaps that is because the architect hired to sketch out the first renderings is Hussein Bakri, based in Abu Dhabi.

But Senegal's dry winds and intense heat mean glass buildings are useful only as greenhouses of the kind used to produce its giant strawberry crop. "The images he is

to the growing ranks of the African rich who want to enjoy their wealth with Instagram-ready backgrounds for every shot posted.

But the black capitalism that Akon espouses has little to offer the overwhelming numbers of black people in Africa who are poor because capitalism made them that way.

Who will be serving and cleaning in Akon City? Who will deliver the high end goods to the luxury apartments? Who will be working in the hospital beyond the doctors? The answer, of course, is the black poor.

FOR EVERY millionaire drinking a seaside cocktail, there will be scores of others living in shanty towns outside Akon city trying to scrape a living. Just as there are on the edges of cities across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

How is Akon City a vision of black liberation if the majority of black people there are being oppressed by the rich?

The project is meant to create a lot of jobs for local people, who currently earn on average around £150 a month.

Akon says he wants to do something about that.

But it seems low wages and cheap land is a prime motivator for the project's financial backers.

Derek William of the American construction giant KE international, which is building the city, is effusive.

"It made a tremendous amount of business sense [to locate in Senegal]," he said. "In general, when you go into less developed areas, a dollar goes so much further."

The Senegalese government is so eager to cooperate that it has already handed over 2,000 acres of land for free—and much more could follow.

And, to take maximum advantage of his creation, Akon has decided Akon City will use exclusively his own brand of crypto-currency—the Akoin.

That means every financial transaction will result in a kick back.

AFRICA already has ample experience of black capitalism. There are hundreds of black-owned businesses, banks and factories—and to accompany them, there are black governments and black instruments of state power.

The wealth gap in Africa allows some to live a jet-set life of mansions and top hotels while the majority barely have food to eat.

And any system based on exploitation must also depend on a system of control and coercion.

So when poor rise up, they

are whipped and bludgeoned by black police.

Replacing white bosses with black bosses is no advance.

Neither is swapping the complexion of the cops who beat back resistance.

The divisions that capitalism engenders among the poor are very much part of the system in Africa too.

The divide and rule policies of the imperialist empires of the 19th and 20th centuries are now articulated by the post-independence ruling class.

Just as before, they encourage continual conflict and rivalry as means of diversion.

So Akon says African-Americans must "move past slavery" and stop blaming "every mishap" on the past.

He is parroting the same right wing nonsense that Republicans use to deflect blame away from the racism that seeps from capitalist institutions.

Their collective veneration of the black entrepreneur finds an echo in a largely forgotten part of US president Richard Nixon's "Southern Strategy" of the late 1960s.

In the wake of dozens of black ghetto uprisings came demands for proper funding of housing, schools, jobs and healthcare.

NIXON hoped to use black anger as a way of frightening white people, especially in the South, into voting Republican.

But he also sought to redirect black demands. "Much of the black militant talk these days is actually in terms far closer to the doctrines of free enterprise than to those of the welfarist '30s," he claimed.

He promised, "More black ownership. Black pride, black jobs, black opportunity, and yes, black power—in the best, the constructive sense of that often misapplied term."

Black Americans, Nixon said, "do not want more government programmes which perpetuate dependency".

"They don't want to be a colony in a nation," he said. "They want the pride, and the self-respect, and the dignity that can only come if they have an equal chance to own their own homes, to own their own businesses, to be managers and executives."

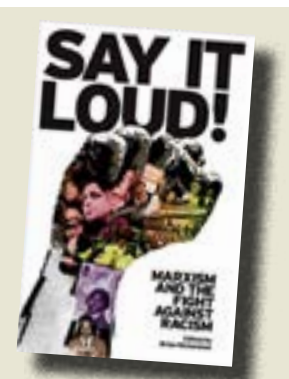
READ MORE

● **Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America—1945-1982** by Manning Marable (second hand)

● **Say it loud! Marxism and the fight against racism** edited by Brian Richardson, £9.99

● **Marcus Garvey—a liberating legacy of challenging racism** Socialist Worker article by Ken Olende. Go to bit.ly/GarveyOlende

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



The fictional city of Wakanda portrayed in the film *Black Panther* (top), Farming for chillies in Senegal—many farmers live in poverty (above)

Here Nixon and Akon agree wholeheartedly.

Black people are themselves responsible for the oppression they face, and by focusing on success, they can find a way out of it. Of course, this lets the government entirely off the hook.

In the name of "black empowerment" Nixon slashed funding for government programmes for everything from after school clubs to elderly care.

For many the slogan of "Black Power" was a call for revolution.

Nixon twisted it into its opposite—a defence of the establishment.

Akon's dream of another African luxury seaside resort seeks to do much the same in the era of Black Lives Matter.



Put people before profit to protect us from coronavirus

As bosses demand we return to work, **Sadie Robinson** says it's possible to have a safer society if we take on the profit system

THE DAILY Mail newspaper last week whined that "railways, roads and offices stand empty" despite schools reopening.

The bosses and their backers are screaming for a return to "business as usual".

They say if we don't accept this, we will be stuck with lockdown measures that get in the way of profits—known as "the economy".

Understandably lots of people do not want to return to busy and unsafe trains, buses, offices and workplaces.

At the same time many fear being isolated at home for months on end, and worry about the impact on jobs.

But these are not the only options. We could have a Covid-safer society—but it would mean challenging the way that society is organised.

Firstly it would cost far more money than those at the top want to spend.

For instance, schools could teach children in smaller classes to enable social distancing. To do this, schools would need to buy up more buildings and recruit extra workers.

Ideally, it would be good to figure out just how much transport is needed in the first place. Industries could draw up plans for a mix of at-work and home working, depending on the jobs.

But this begs a much wider question—what are we going to work for?

Is it really necessary to have thousands of workers travelling across London to build more office blocks

networks because the transport system is made up of different competing firms. And cramming as many passengers as possible into as few trains as possible is a lot more profitable.

For instance, we could have much safer public transport.

There could be limits on passenger numbers. People could book a "slot" on a service, in the same way that people now have to book a gym slot.

But it's much harder to organise this across entire

ARE RIVAL firms the best way of organising transport?



in the city? Is bringing together hundreds of workers in factories to make weapons a good idea?

Is it urgent to rush children back to school so they can start cramming for exams that are rigged in favour of the rich?

Coronavirus has led more people to question how society is organised.

Capitalism is not designed to protect the majority of people at the best of times.

During serious crises such as the coronavirus pandemic, it fails horrifically.

We can and should demand changes, and it's possible to win some.

Before coronavirus, no one would have thought that the Tories would pay millions of workers to stay at home for several months.

But ultimately we aren't safe in a system that puts profit above all else. A better system is possible.

After the 1917 revolution in Russia, typhus posed a major threat. The revolutionary government confiscated stocks of medicines from speculators and set up factories to produce more.

In Moscow train stations, disinfection teams treated tens of thousands of passengers daily.

Ultimately the new system, run by and for working class people, helped to stop the spread of the pandemic.

Coronavirus has exposed capitalism as a system that wants to literally work us to death.

We need to fight to get rid of it.

A Covid-safe system would involve taking on capitalist competition

FRANTZ FANON

A vital defence of violence by the oppressed

by NICK CLARK

EVERY STRUGGLE that confronts the violence of the system by throwing back some of its own faces the accusation that resistance itself is the problem.

In response many turn to the ideas of Frantz Fanon—the anti-colonial writer and activist.

He has inspired many liberation struggles, including some of the most militant movements in the US.

In the late 1960s, as riots against racism spread, Dan Watson of the radical Liberation magazine reported that, “Every brother on a rooftop can quote Fanon.”

Colonised

Fanon was the product of the colonial system he spent his life fighting. Born in 1925 in Martinique, an island in the Caribbean colonised by France, he was brought up there to see himself as French.

But when he joined the Free French Army during the Second World War he found he was a second class citizen.

FRANTZ FANON analysed the roots of violence in colonised societies

He returned briefly to Martinique where he was taught by the radical poet Aime Cesaire, who introduced him to “negritude”—a movement that celebrated black identity.

Continuing his studies in

Paris, where he trained to become a psychiatrist, he wrote his first influential book, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

It reflected “the lived experience of a black person” and analysed the way racism worked. Fanon argued that

racism created “blackness” as an identity inferior to “whiteness” then forced that identity onto black people.

Fanon moved to Algeria—which was colonised by France—and joined the armed liberation movement

the FLN, eventually becoming a leading figure in it.

His books *Year Five of the Algerian Revolution*, and *The Wretched of the Earth* feature some of his most important anti-racism ideas.

In the 50s and 60s, when Fanon was writing, empires were being shaken by anti-colonial movements.

The Wretched of the Earth, written after Fanon was diagnosed with cancer at the end of 1960, was a defence of the anti-colonial movements from their liberal critics.

But it was also an attempt to argue against the betrayal of the movement by its leaders.

Justification

Fanon made his justification of violence in a famous chapter of this book. His starting point was that colonialism was based on violence.

He described colonial society as one completely shaped by violence. It meant that violence wasn’t just an inevitable part of resistance—but that armed struggle was necessary to destroy the basis of the colonial system.

He said this made

colonised societies different from capitalism in European countries, where the ruling class rule through their control of workplaces and the economy. Because of this, Fanon was dismissive of workers’ struggles.

Instead he saw armed struggle as a potentially transformational force that would create the space for a new society.

He argued that not only did victories through armed struggle help empower colonised people, it also united them—while guarding against betrayal by middle class leaders who sought compromise.

Algeria was liberated shortly after Fanon’s death. Mass strikes and demonstrations were central to the defeat of the French rulers.

The FLN became the new government—and collapsed into the sort of compromise Fanon had warned against.

Yet his arguments about the roots of violence—and his defence of those who fight back—remain vital tools.

This is part of a series about radical black lives Go to bit.ly/SWBlackLives

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Why QAnon conspiracy theory is so important for Trump

by SIMON BASKETTER

FOLLOWERS OF the QAnon conspiracy theory believe a lot of things.

Any apparent crisis or incompetence is actually cover to let Donald Trump expose thousands of paedophiles—including Hillary and Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Tom Hanks. They'll soon be under arrest, or perhaps they are already.

Their crimes? Torturing and murdering children, then harvesting a chemical from their blood.

Trump said, "I don't know much about the movement other than I understand they like me very much, which I appreciate."

He has promoted Twitter accounts pushing QAnon over 216 times.

Asked what he thought about the theory that he is saving the world from a satanic cult Trump replied, "I haven't heard that, but is it supposed to be a bad thing or a good thing?"

"The Storm" is the predicted great mass arrest event, in which over 100,000 people from the highest levels of power and entertainment face a day of reckoning. The Texas Republican Party sells "We are the Storm" T-shirts.

It comes from a dinner in October 2017, which Trump said was "maybe the calm before the storm".

The same month an anonymous user of online forums claiming to be a high-level government informant emerged.

Cryptic

Various cryptic messages followed. They did some name dropping of real conspiracies such as Operation Mockingbird, a 1970s CIA effort to blackmail journalists. But most of it was untrue, fantastical and right wing.

Some followers believe that Trump is Q—though others think it's John F Kennedy Jr, who they believe faked his 1999 death (he didn't).

Actor Tom Hanks is a child abuser because Q used the word "big" in several posts and Hanks starred in

the 1988 film Big. It is that bad. QAnon is now an all-encompassing theory, one with dozens of offshoots and side plots.

The coronavirus pandemic increased QAnon's reach. Google searches for QAnon increased tenfold from January to July. And the social media algorithms meant if you looked up what was wrong with wearing a mask you were going to hit a QAnon forum or video fairly soon.

Real-life wealthy sex abusers such as Jeffrey Epstein are given cover by powerful people.

So a movement focused on unmasking them and bringing them to justice can seem appealing.

That is part of the problem—the rich and the powerful really have covered up child abuse. They do conspire to keep their power and their secrets.

But as with other attempts to mobilise around this, such as paedo-hunting videos, they provide a crowd for fascist recruitment. Importantly many other right wing conspiracy theories fit neatly within QAnon—such as ones about Jewish bankers controlling the world.

This summer saw the SaveOurChildren hashtag flood social media with content by QAnon followers.

It led to small protests around the world. There was one at Buckingham Palace about Prince Andrew.

Plots

There have been dozens of instances in the US of people in QAnon-related plots. In April a man with QAnon ties was arrested for derailing a train with the intention of aiming it at a hospital ship in San Pedro, California.

QAnon followers have been egged on by a president who promised them vengeance against their enemies and never followed through. He didn't "lock her up". He didn't "build that wall".

The dramatic fantasies of Trump's militant fringe are an attempt to rationalise the duller reality of capitalism and explain why Trump didn't deliver. And that makes them dangerous.

FOLLOWERS OF the QAnon conspiracy fill Trump's rallies

Racist conspiracies and right wing politics—a murky and sordid history

QANON IS not the first conspiracy used by the US right.

In 1909 Woman's World magazine delivered an expose to two million US households. Then came a best-selling book, written by Chicago's District Attorney, called War on the White Slave Trade.

White parents were warned their girls were being snatched off the street and sold into sex slavery.

The book warned, "Ice cream parlours and fruit stores largely run by foreigners are the places where scores of girls have taken their first step downward."

It provided a reactionary outlet for fear and rage at women entering the workforce and the independence that brought—and combined it with brutal racism.

The result was the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910. Better known as the Mann Act, it banned the transportation of any girl or woman across state lines for any "immoral" purpose.

To enforce the Mann Act, the federal government created the Bureau of Investigation. Nine

days after the Act was passed Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight boxing champion, beat James Jeffries, the "great white hope".

The bureau arrested Johnson twice under the new law for crossing state lines with his white girlfriend. He fled to Europe but returned in 1920 to go to prison.

Then in 1942 millions of white Americans believed the US president's wife Eleanor Roosevelt was traveling throughout the

former confederate states, organising black women into secret "Eleanor Clubs".

The club motto was, "A white woman in the kitchen by 1943." She apparently encouraged black men to stockpile weapons—specifically ice picks.

All nonsense. But the rumours were circulated through newspapers, not just word of mouth.

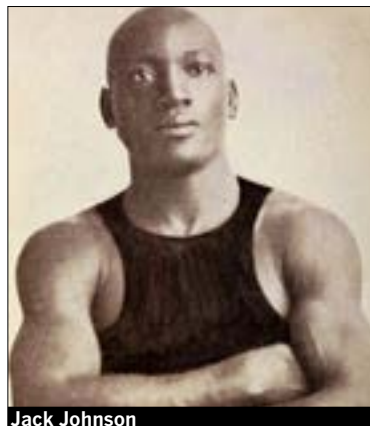
As the US entered the Second World War, major changes upended traditional racial and gender hierarchies.

Millions of black men joined the armed forces or got jobs in the war manufacturing plants, freeing themselves from the economic dependency of sharecropping.

Black women found new opportunities. Industrial employment almost doubled and wages rose.

The racist conspiracies were a way for reactionary protest against a world in which women and black people demanded rights.

They strengthened rather than weakened those at the top. The same is true today.



Jack Johnson

Damning new report blasts the GMB union

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

BRITAIN'S THIRD largest trade union is "institutionally sexist" and "bullying, misogyny, cronyism and sexual harassment are endemic", according to a lawyer's report published last week.

Karon Monaghan QC's report comes after the GMB union's general secretary Tim Roache stepped down amid allegations of misconduct in May.

The report does not deal with the matters in the letter—addressed from "GMB Sisters" to the union's president Barbara Plant—which had raised the concerns.

Monaghan's report describes "an environment in which sexual harassment takes place and in which it goes largely unchallenged and unreported".

"Complaints of sexual harassment by members and employees are rare", but the union's bullying and harassment policy "might deter a complainant from complaining".

The bullying policy warns the complainant that, if the allegations are found to be "spurious", "perpetrator/s will be subject to the GMB Disciplinary Procedure".

Of the small number of complaints made, very few resulted in formal action being taken against the accused.

In one instance the complainant was told, "It was expected that an

individual should 'initially refer any complaint of this nature [advances] to the alleged perpetrator'.

"The complaint was peremptorily dismissed."

The institutional sexism plays out in the representation of women in the GMB's structures, with far fewer women in senior "officer grade" jobs rather than "staff grades".

The report says this means "women are 'seen' as support staff because they are most likely to occupy those grades so making it more difficult for them to enter officer grades, reinforcing the job segregation and stereotyping around male and female roles".

"When women do succeed in achieving more senior roles, it is often said that they have 'slept their way to the top'," it adds.

Monaghan's report links the failings around sexual harassment to the GMB's bureaucratic structures. She singles out the role of exclusively male regional secretaries "who hold the real power, along with the general secretary" and run "fiefdoms".

Climate

This means that "challenging their authority is exceptionally difficult". "There are, and have been, regional secretaries who maintain power largely through bullying, threats and victimisation and by creating a climate of fear," the report says.

Monaghan says "fundamental change is required" but warns that "it will take robust and committed leadership to successfully push through the changes required".

"I doubt that all of the regional secretaries will be keen to relinquish that power and so firm leadership will be required," she says.

Monaghan makes 27 recommendations, including greater representation of women and a bespoke complaints procedure for sexual harassment.

The report comes against the backdrop of power struggles and manoeuvring within the GMB bureaucracy and Labour right.

Rank and file members of the union are absent in decision making in the "fiefdoms".

Fundamental change requires a break from the way the union has been run, not a changing of the guard.

Arts workers on strike



WORKERS ARE on all out strike at London's Tate Modern gallery

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Tate workers build the resistance

WORKERS ON all out strike at the Tate Modern protested on London's South Bank last Saturday after several of them were issued redundancy notices.

More than 300 people who work in the galleries' gift shops and other services are expected to be made redundant.

This is despite a £7 million government bailout. Meanwhile some of the Tate's top bosses continue to earn £100,000 a year.

The workers' PCS union is demanding that no one should be made redundant while anyone at the Tate earns £100,000 a year.

It is also demanding that 10 percent of the bailout grant

should go towards protecting jobs—and that if the money isn't enough then the gallery should demand more.

Meanwhile, some 400 workers at the nearby Southbank centre also face the sack. Workers there are currently balloting to strike.

Institutions

Workers from the Tate and the Southbank were set to protest together on Saturday of this week.

PCS Culture group said, "The managers of these institutions—the arts themselves—have relied on a cheap, 'casual' workforce (the only 'diverse' workforce in the arts).

"Instead of joining workers' and unions' plea for adequate funding, millionaire appointees have behaved as expected—throwing workers to the wolves.

"Against this attack against regular peoples' livelihoods—often, it seems, the only workers in the arts without 'connections', without 'an in'—we ask that you march with us on Saturday 12th.

"This march will bring together union and branches from across the arts and wider labour movement."

Nick Clark

Donate to the strike fund at bit.ly/TateStrike. For solidarity details go to AgiTate on Facebook



GMB needs fundamental change

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

Ballot result due over return to offices

RESULTS OF a consultative strike ballot by workers in the Department for Work and Pensions were yet to be announced as Socialist Worker went to press.

Workers there are facing attempts by bosses to force them into unsafe working hours, including extending opening times to Saturdays and 8pm on weekdays.

The workers' PCS union said, "The infection rate is still too high.

"Every day new local lockdowns are announced. "It is wrong to play politics with people's lives.

"PCS believes that the decision to extend services is a political decision by ministers who want to look good."



The DWP wants extended opening

AIRPORT WORKERS

Fight to beat the 'fire and rehire' blackmail

by ISABEL RINGROSE

BOSSES AT Heathrow Airport Holdings (Hal) have told workers they must take pay cuts of up to 20 percent or face mass job losses.

The airport management has issued formal section 188 notices. This means it will be able to fire and rehire around 4,700 employees.

The notice also allows bosses to bypass negotiations after a 45-day period, and then re-employ workers on new contracts with worse terms.

The consequence will be pay cuts of up to £10,000 if staff choose to stay on, and unemployment if they do not.

Airport bosses have already imposed 20 percent pay cuts on office staff. Chief executive John Holland-Kaye had previously suggested that up to 25,000 employees could lose their jobs.

Grabbed

Holland-Kaye grabbed £4.2 million in 2018, a pay rise of 103.2 percent from the previous year.

Holland-Kaye had the audacity to say, "The reality is that hardworking people face losing their livelihoods, their sense of self-worth, perhaps even their homes, families and mental health."

Multi-millionaire bosses such as Holland-Kaye have no



A PROTEST at parliament last week over easyjet job cuts

PICTURE: UNITE UNION ON FACEBOOK

idea how hard it is for their workers to survive on furlough or on pay cuts.

Job losses and pay cuts are not inevitable.

At the beginning of the pandemic the airport announced it had a war chest of £3.2 billion and could survive without a flight leaving for a year.

Hal also paid a £100 million dividend to shareholders, which include the Qatari royal family.

Workers must not pay the price for the crisis. The Unite union said it was "deeply concerned" and is pushing the

airport to continue talks.

In July it said it was committed to "discussing fair cost reductions". This has merely encouraged further attacks.

Unite is currently formally putting the proposals to the workforce in a consultative ballot. It is imperative the union leaders encourage and back a real fight for jobs and a sustainable society.

Bosses across aviation—and in many other areas—are using the crisis to slash pay and conditions. There must be no surrender to their blackmail.

■ **INFLIGHT catering workers at Dnata are also facing "fire and rehire". Bosses plan to destroy their present pay and conditions and to enforce contracts of just 20 hours a week, plunging them into poverty.**

■ **EASYJET CLOSED its bases at Newcastle, Southend and Stansted airports last week with the loss of over 600 cabin crew jobs. In total the company is in the process of making over 1,200 cabin crew redundant, one quarter of its cabin crew workforce.**

SHOP WORKERS

Defend Richie Venton

PROTESTERS FROM several trade unions picketed a Glasgow Ikea store last Friday to demand the reinstatement of a union rep sacked for fighting cuts to workers' conditions.

Richie Venton, an Usdaw union rep at the Braehead store, was dismissed after warning staff of planned changes to their rights.

The attacks will see many relying on statutory sick pay if they have coronavirus or have to self-isolate.

The changes mean Ikea workers with perfect attendance will only be entitled to their wages for the first ten days of sickness. This is short of the self-isolation period of two weeks.

A penalty points system dictates that if they have been absent more than twice in the previous year, they will go straight on to statutory sick pay.

The Usdaw branch said Venton "has always put the welfare of workers first". It added, "We demand that Ikea

immediately reinstate Richie Venton to his job and to his position as our elected union representative and stop their cuts to our conditions.

"If that does not happen immediately, we call on Usdaw to organise every possible form of action, including legal action and a vote for industrial action."

Venton is a well-known socialist and member of the Scottish Socialist Party.

After a wave of outrage over Venton's sacking, Ikea has promised it will pay contracted hours to all those self isolating.

But many staff members work far more than their contracted hours in an average week. They will be heavily penalised under the current company scheme.

● Sign support petition at bit.ly/PetitionIkea for solidarity details go to reinstaterichieventon.com Tell your MP to sign the parliamentary motion supporting the campaign. Go to bit.ly/EDM4Richie

UNISON GENERAL SECRETARY

Socialist on ballot paper

SOCIALIST candidate Paul Holmes has won enough nominations to guarantee a place on the ballot paper for the Unison union general secretary election.

He has won the backing of 25 branches so far, with over two weeks left of the nomination period.

He's also won the nomination from Unison's local government service group executive—a body within the union that covers 650,000 members.

Paul's manifesto promises to fight for a £15 an hour

minimum wage, begin an national anti-austerity campaign and to push to implement a green agenda for the union.

He's also promising to improve collective bargaining arrangements and pour more money into local and regional branches.

Activists should keep pushing for the highest possible number of nominations and prepare to win votes for Paul when the voting starts on 28 October.

● Go to Paul4GenSec on Facebook

OBITUARY

Ray Holmes 1938-2020

MEMBERS AND supporters of Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Socialist Workers Party (SWP) are saddened to hear of the death of our friend and comrade Ray Holmes.

Ray was born in the pit village of Langwith in the North Derbyshire coalfield and went down the pit.

He became an NUM union activist and delegate for Shirebrook colliery.

Ray was one of a generation of rank and file miners who led and campaigned for militant strikes. This often brought them into conflict not just with managers but with the established leadership of the union.

Ray always said that a big part of shaping his ideas of "socialism from below" and which led him to join the

International Socialists—the forerunner of the SWP—were the arguments he had with Communist Party members in 1968 after Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring.

When Ray stopped working at the pit he went to Ruskin College and worked in adult and continuing education.

On moving back to Shirebrook he threw himself into community activism and became a key member in the local SWP branch.

He played a crucial role in leading local anti-fascist activity as the British National Party Nazis tried to gain a foothold in the area.

He also fought to challenge what he saw as the complacency and corruption of much of the local leadership of Labour Party.

In 2007 he stood as a campaigning socialist candidate for Respect in the



Ray Holmes

local elections against the leader of Shirebrook council and won a stunning victory.

Ray used his position in the council chamber to campaign against cuts, academisation, privatisation, and to be a voice against racism.

He played an important role in the campaigns to expose the injustices at Sports Direct and to fight against attempts to vilify migrant workers. Above all Ray was

someone engaged with revolutionary political ideas.

He loved coming to the annual Marxism Festival and was very distressed when his developing ill health meant he could no longer make it.

He was an avid reader and writer.

He really enjoyed our meetings, engaging and arguing with comrades and encouraging new members and activists.

He burned with anger against the injustice that capitalism inflicts on humanity.

He also would go out of his way to show support and solidarity to comrades, friends and anyone fighting back.

We send our condolences to his surviving children Nicky and Bradley, to his sisters Beryl and Elsie, and to his partner Penny.

James Eaden for Chesterfield and North Derbyshire SWP

LGBT+

March for trans rights

LONDON TRANS+ Pride was set to take place this Saturday, with a London march planned at 1.30pm from Wellington Arch to Parliament Square.

Organiser, London Trans+ Pride March, has said people will be marching in direct response to the Tories' plans to abandon progressive reforms to the Gender Recognition Act.

Reforms would have made legal self-identification an easier process.

The march, which follows the first London Trans+ Pride in 2019, is also a response to Tory equalities minister Liz Truss' transphobic rhetoric.

London Trans+ Pride March has been clear that the event is an unsponsored protest, demanding rights.

● For details go to bit.ly/TransPride20

UNIVERSITIES

Soas votes for fightback

UNISON UNION members at Soas University of London have voted overwhelmingly for strikes to stop compulsory redundancies.

Some 75 percent backed strikes in the ballot, which saw a big turnout of 72 percent. And 88 percent also supported action short of a strike.

A restructuring at Soas threatens 88 compulsory redundancies in Professional Services.

A vote for action in a consultative ballot has already pushed bosses to drop plans to impose a 37.5-hour working week on Professional Services staff.

UCU union members at Soas are also balloting for action to save jobs.

The ballot was scheduled to end on Friday of this week.

NHS PROTESTS FIGHT FOR PAY

by TOMÁŠ TENGELE-EVANS

HEALTH WORKERS were set to take to the streets in towns and cities across Britain on Saturday in their latest day of action to demand a pay rise.

Supporters of the grassroots group, NHS Workers Say No to Public Sector Pay Inequality, have organised protests in more than 20 places. They include London, Bristol, Manchester, Wigan, Liverpool, Sheffield, Chesterfield and Newcastle.

In London health workers plan to march from BBC Broadcasting House on Portland Place to Trafalgar Square.

Kim, a community nurse who has organised a march in Plymouth, said, “The only way to save the NHS and to retain staff is to have a decent pay rise”

“Otherwise no one will want to come into this profession with pay being so low.” She told Socialist Worker, “our wages just don’t cover our outlays. It’s very hard if you’re wanting to rent or buy a place.

“I don’t know what the



WORKERS ARE enraged at the Tories

PICTURE: DAVE GILCHRIST

government is thinking by not giving us a pay rise, if they want 40,000 more nurses.”

Workers’ anger over pay has been stoked by the hypocrisy of ministers joining

the Claps for the NHS and praising them as key workers during the lockdown. But Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak left out NHS workers from public sector pay increases

awarded for workers’ “vital contribution” in the pandemic.

Kim said the pandemic “hasn’t gone away” with workers “still trying to battle through it”. Staff are starting

to feel sick and exhausted and people are going off ill,” she explained. “We find it difficult to fill posts down here.

“We’re still really busy in the community. Doctors are

seeing more patients—and if they’re not going out to see patients, they’re asking us to go and see patients.

“It’s still really stressful.”

Ministers have argued that the NHS is in the middle of a three-year pay deal, amounting to 6.5 percent across those years.

But the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Unison union leaderships mis-sold the pay deal, with their publicity leading many workers to believe they would receive more money than they did.

And that deal came after a ten-year pay freeze which saw workers lose up to 20 percent in real terms.

While the unions remain split and failing to act over pay, the grassroots campaign is demanding a 15 percent pay rise.

The Tory government is weak and has been forced into U-turns during the coronavirus outbreak.

Mobilising thousands of people onto the streets over NHS pay could win a pay rise.

And it could inflict a serious blow to the Tories and bosses’ attempts to make working class people pay for the coronavirus crisis.

Activists are organising to build anti-racist movement

SUPPORTERS OF Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) across Britain planned to “take the knee” for Black Lives Matter on Friday this week.

The national day of action comes on the same day as a trial hearing for the four former US police officers involved in the death of George Floyd.

The judge will decide whether they will be tried collectively or as individuals for the killing, which sparked a wave of Black Lives Matter protests.

The following week SUTR plans another



In Dover around 150 people came out to welcome refugees

PICTURE: KENT ANTI-RACISM NETWORK

national day of action to say, “Refugees Welcome.”

A statement from SUTR said, “The horror of news breaking in recent weeks, of more lives lost needlessly as people seek in desperation to survive by crossing the sea, was devastating and enraging.

“It comes as a result of racist border policies.”

It said Sudanese refugee Abdulfatah Hamdallah died recently because “the Tories’ border controls are constructed to keep desperate people out, preferring

them to drown rather than welcome them.”

Meanwhile, around 150 anti-racists joined a refugees welcome protest in Dover, Kent, last Saturday.

It was organised by Kent Anti Racist Network and supported by the Medway SUTR group and others.

Up to 200 Nazis gathered in the town.

One eyewitness said, “It was a poor far right turnout given all the hype and publicity surrounding their national call out.

“There were no players there from groups such as Britain First or For

Britain, who have recently looked to intimidate asylum seekers at hotels.

“A group of ‘Chelsea Headhunters’—a notorious fascist football group—met up with a few thugs each from Cardiff and Millwall.”

On the same day SUTR supporters in Glasgow protested in the wake of the death of Mercy Baguma.

She died because of the Tories’ racist immigration and welfare rules, which meant she had no support after her leave to remain ended.

For protest details see **Stand Up To Racism** on Facebook